

CD 2012-47/8



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, Director of Orchestral Studies and Conductor

"Passages"

Thursday, April 5, 2012

7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre

Edward Johnson Building

2011-12 SEASON

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, Conductor



PROGRAM

Prelude for Orchestra (2010)
UTSO Composition Competition Winner

Elisha Denburg
b.1982

David Bowser, graduate student conductor

Francesca da Rimini, Op. 32
Symphonic fantasia after Dante

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky
1840-1893

INTERMISSION

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61
Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770-1827

Jamie Kruspe, violin
UTSO Concerto Competition Winner



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Program Notes

Prelude for Orchestra (2010)

ELISHA DENBURG (b.1982)

Elisha Denburg, winner of the UTSO

Composition Competition, writes:

"When I wrote this piece, a major confluence of events was occurring in my life. Many significant changes were on the horizon, causing me to feel many contrasting emotions at once: overwhelmed but peaceful, nervous yet excited, and anxious but ultimately joyous. I was very aware of what was happening as it was happening and my being in a constant state of awareness caused the present moment to always seem as though it were a prelude to the next. To me, a prelude is something that can be viewed as being complete in and of itself, but that is also a harbinger of things to come. This piece attempts to capture that notion, perhaps suggesting that a point of departure can also be a point of arrival."

Francesca da Rimini – Symphonic fantasia after Dante, Op. 32 (1876)

PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

"There is no greater pain than to recall past joy in present hell," are lines from *Canto V* of Dante's *Inferno*, as Francesca da Rimini begins her tale. As he read these lines and re-read them on a train to Paris in the summer of 1876, Tchaikovsky turned a blind eye to earlier pages in Dante's epic poem telling of such legendary lovers as Cleopatra, Dido, Helen of Troy, Achilles, and Tristan. Instead he found Francesca's death and subsequent suffering for having loved her husband's brother the most compelling to both his own frame of mind and his creative needs. He was, he wrote, 'inflamed' with a desire to write a symphonic fantasia on Francesca. Just three weeks of intense composition and a further three weeks of orchestration was all it took the 36 year-old Tchaikovsky to portray the bleak disparity between passionate illicit love and the inevitable tortuous suffering that ensues – life experiences by which the composer was himself deeply tormented.

If *Francesca da Rimini* is, ultimately, as much about Tchaikovsky himself as love in 13th century Italy, the intensity which Tchaikovsky brings to bear on this passion is without precedent in his music, surpassing that even of his fantasy-overture *Romeo and Juliet*. His emotional state of mind was in turmoil as he composed. A few months later, inability to come to terms with his own homosexuality was to drive him on a collision course right into an ill-fated marriage. "In no work he had yet written," states British author David Brown in his definitive biography of the composer, "had his personal condition been of such importance in determining the character of what issued from his creative faculties."

The musical language of *Francesca* is somewhat coloured by Tchaikovsky's visit to the first complete performance of Wagner's *Ring* cycle in Bayreuth. While his articles for a Russian newspaper were respectful and his private correspondence frank ('murderously boring'), the ominous chords that open the symphonic fantasia portray an inferno to whose darkness Wagner was no stranger. Even Tchaikovsky was surprised: "Isn't it odd that I should have submitted to the influence of a work of art that in general is extremely antipathetic to me?" The three-chord motif recurs in later sections of the three sections of the fantasy. The forbidding *Andante lugubre* introduction leads to a tumultuous *Allegro vivo* in which Dante enters Hell's second circle. Here, in a whirlwind of orchestral virtuosity, Dante encounters the "raging tempests in eternal darkness" of souls whose sensual lust condemned them to such punishment. As the intensity rises and subsides, the shade of Francesca emerges to a poignantly lyrical clarinet solo of a starkly different character. Now veiled and more intimate, the theme is prolonged on muted strings and gradually taken up by the entire orchestra. As the love between Francesca and her brother-in-law Paolo grows in intensity, an additional theme is introduced by the cor anglais, with harp. Eventually and inevitably Dante and his doomed lovers are pulled back into the terrifying storm and the turmoil of Hades.

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61 (1806)
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

BEETHOVEN AND THE VIOLIN

Of the three best-known classical Viennese composers, Beethoven was by far the worst violinist. Contemporary accounts speak highly of the skill of Mozart and Haydn on the violin and viola. Beethoven, however, sent a shudder down the spine of his listeners when he took up the fiddle. "Have mercy -- quit!" one of his friends once exclaimed. His pupil Ferdinand Ries remembers the painful experience of playing Beethoven's violin sonatas with the composer. Beethoven would become wrapped up in the music, he said, not caring about fingering mistakes and intonation.

Still, it takes a bad worker to blame his tools. And a lack of skill on the fingerboard was no barrier to Beethoven composing a masterpiece that has become the yardstick by which all subsequent violin concertos are measured. Beethoven knew what the violin could do and could be made to do. His apprenticeship began in the viola section of the Elector of Bonn's orchestra. A few violin lessons followed, in his early days in Vienna. It continued when he began work on an earlier violin concerto -- or, at least, a movement of a concerto -- back in 1790. But all we know of this work is a surviving fragment of 259 bars of the first movement. A decade later, Beethoven wrote two short *Romances* for violin and orchestra. They are charming works that still hold a place in the repertoire (and provide the fillers for countless CDs). Then came the Triple Concerto for violin, cello, piano and orchestra -- another work that helped lay the groundwork for the violin concerto. Beginning in 1798, Beethoven took to the medium of the violin sonata with enthusiasm, completing nine of his ten violin sonatas before he started work on the concerto. The last of the nine, the *Kreutzer*, demanded considerable technical and musical skill from its performers. On its score, Beethoven wrote that the work is written "in a very concerto-like manner, almost like that of an actual concerto." By 1806, Beethoven was ready to compose a full concerto. It was to become the first and the greatest of 19th century violin concertos.

**PLAYED ON AN UPSIDE-DOWN VIOLIN
WITH ONE STRING**

Franz Clement was more famous than Beethoven when the two musicians first met. Clement was then a 13 year-old violin prodigy, renowned throughout Europe. Beethoven signed his autograph book. In 1806 the two met again. Clement, now 26, led the orchestra at the Theater an der Wien and maintained a wide reputation as a violinist. In 1806, he asked Beethoven for a concerto and Beethoven consulted him when he began work on the score. Beethoven laid out the violin part on four staves, allowing plenty of space for revisions. On two of the staves he drafted a part for a piano transcription of the concerto -- including a cadenza for piano, with timpani. He worked speedily on the concerto and did not 'worry' at the themes unduly in his sketchbooks. He was confident in what he did, having by now four piano concertos and four symphonies under his belt. By the time of the first performance of the new violin concerto on December 12, 1806, the ink was barely dry. Legend has it that Clement sight read the part in public. Small wonder that when Beethoven came to inscribe the score he punningly asked Clement for clemency: "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement," he wrote, mixing languages. Clement played the first movement in the first half of the concert; the second and third movements came towards the end of a program of music by Méhul, Mozart, Cherubini and Handel. The final work was a set of variations by Clement himself, which he played on a single string with the violin held upside down.

**A ROMANTIC CONCERTO FOR A
CLASSICAL SOLOIST**

All this suggests that Clement was a player of phenomenal technical skill. He was famed for his perfect intonation and his impeccable bowing. But he lacked the vigour and volume of tone that we associate with the great Romantic virtuosos of the violin. Clement excelled in gracefulness and refinement of expression. His violin could not engage the orchestra in equal conflict -- as the piano already could -- so the composer had to find new approaches. Virtuosity is just one ingredient in the makeup of Beethoven's concerto. The music's essential quality is radiant, lyrical sweetness and serenity,

not grandeur or technical display. The music, paradoxically, fuses highly dramatic movement with a solo line that is essentially lyrical.

The four soft drum beats that open the work are to dominate its opening movement. They go to the first movement what the rhythmically assertive 'Fate knocks on the door' motif is to the Fifth Symphony (which Beethoven was working on simultaneously with the concerto). The four notes underline both themes of the movement. They lie at the heart of the conflict in the opening theme – a conflict of tonality where the established key is violently contradicted by the four-note pattern. The repeated notes are heard under the second theme of the concerto – a closely related simple rising and falling phrase on woodwinds – which, in itself, is music stripped down to its essence. This theme has a darker side, heard in the minor key, with hollow octaves, before moving on to more passionate utterances. The cadenza is left to the soloist. Joachim's cadenza used to be heard. (Joseph Joachim championed the work as a 13 year-old under Mendelssohn and the work's popularity can be traced back to him). The one written by the 19 year-old Fritz Kreisler is more usually heard these days. The Russian Alfred Schnittke wrote one for Gidon Kremer that includes quotations from Bartók and Berg. Several soloists have also

written their own cadenzas.

The slow movement is one of Beethoven's most astonishing pieces of sustained lyrical writing. The music is, in essence, static (the perfect vehicle for lyrical outpouring) which is nevertheless formally satisfying. Only Beethoven, complete master of classical form, could have achieved it. The movement begins like a set of variations, with the theme present in its pristine form, however much the soloist may elaborately decorate it. After four variations, an entirely new theme is introduced and we proceed in the manner of double variations – first one theme then the other is varied. The strings violently break the mood and a cadenza leads without break into the finale.

The rondo finale has strong rustic overtones. Its unceasing rhythmic drive is the perfect foil to the stasis of the slow movement. A third opportunity for cadenza is given to the soloist. It leads, in the kind of twist beloved of Beethoven at this period, to the most unlikely of keys – A flat. An exceptionally long coda is needed to absorb the shock of this diversion, working its way back to a triumphant close in D major.

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Comments welcomed: klnotes@sympatico.ca

Biographies

DAVID BRISKIN, a conductor renowned for the versatility of his repertoire and the depth of his musical interpretations, was appointed Director of Orchestral Studies and Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra in July 2008, and has been Music Director and Principal Conductor of The National Ballet of Canada since 2006. Prior to moving to Toronto, Mr. Briskin lived and worked for 23 years as a conductor and educator in New York City. For seven years, Mr. Briskin served as Conductor with American Ballet Theatre, leading performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York's City Center and in major opera houses throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas. He is a frequent guest conductor with such companies as New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and Houston Ballet, among others. For three seasons, Mr. Briskin served as Music Director for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and served as conductor for The Juilliard School's

Dance Division from 1993 to 2005.

In addition to his work in dance, Mr. Briskin has enjoyed great success on the concert stage. He has conducted the Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Akron, Cincinnati Pops and Singapore Symphony Orchestras; the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Juilliard Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, among others.

For six years he served as the Music Director of the 150-voice Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra in New York, a tenure highlighted by annual performances at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Briskin's opera schedule has taken him throughout the U.S. and Canada including performances with such companies as Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera Carolina, Lake George Opera and Sarasota Opera. He has also collaborated with the Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York, creating and conducting productions for their highly acclaimed Arts in

Education series, and served on the faculty of the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv from 1999–2005.

Over the years Mr. Briskin has been extremely active in arts education. For three seasons he was Artistic Coordinator and Host of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Education Concerts. He has given lectures for the Caramoor Summer Music Festival, the National Society of Arts and Letters and the Conductor's Guild and has participated on panels for the American Symphony Orchestra League and Chamber Music America. He has served on the faculties of Queens College, CUNY, the 92nd Street Y and the Mannes College of Music and had a ten-year association with Lincoln Center Institute for Aesthetic Education. Mr. Briskin attended the Indiana University School of Music where he studied voice, piano and choral conducting. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Master of Arts degree in conducting from Queens College, City University of New York.

ELISHA DENBURG is a composer of contemporary concert music. His works have been commissioned, premiered, recorded, and toured across Canada, and performed in the US. He has collaborated with artists such as pianist Valerie Tryon, percussion/harp duo Arpatambora, contemporary keyboard collective junctQin, Windago ensemble & choir, TorQ Percussion Quartet, Tonus Vivus Society for New Music, and the Sneak Peek Orchestra. His music has also been aired on CBC Radio 2's "The Signal" with Laurie Brown. His orchestral work, "Prelude", was the winner of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra Composition Competition. Other upcoming projects include a new piece for the Montreal-based Ladam Ensemble, and a joint commission from the TorQ Percussion Quartet in conjunction with the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan in honour of the centenary of John Cage. Elisha was also selected to participate in the 2012 Summer Composers Program at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

Elisha serves as Co-Artistic Director of the Toy Piano Composers, a Toronto-based collective founded in 2008 by Monica Clorey and Chris Thornborrow. The TPC, now in its fourth season, commissions local and emerging composers and collaborates with emerging and

established professional performing ensembles, in its diverse new music concert series. The TPC was awarded a Concert Season Music grant from the SOCAN Foundation as well as a Project Grant from the Toronto Arts Council for its 2011–12 season, which includes a collaboration with the Array Music Ensemble.

Currently a DMA Candidate at the University of Toronto, he has twice been the recipient of the Lothar Klein Memorial Fellowship in Composition, as well as the Theodoros Mirkopoulos Fellowship in Composition. His research, supervised by Prof. Caryl Clark, focuses on the synagogue music of the late Canadian composer Sruel Irving Glick.

JAMIE KRUSPE is an accomplished violinist, and a student at the University of Toronto, studying with Jacques Israelievitch and Annalee Patipatanakoon. He started playing violin at age 3, being taught by his mother, Cathie Goldberg. Jamie is currently in his first year of the Masters Performance program at U of T, and has appeared as concertmaster of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra on numerous occasions. In 2008, he appeared in a concert alongside Mr. Israelievitch, featuring all of the Six Sonatas for solo violin by Eugene Ysaÿe, performing the 4th sonata. In November of that year, he made his solo debut with the Koffler Chamber Orchestra, performing "Concerto Accademico" by Vaughan Williams. In addition to many solo recitals, Jamie has performed with Trio Montecristo, which was formed in 2008. Since their formation, the trio has had the chance to work with many distinguished artists including Steven Isserlis and Gilbert Kalish. In the summers of 2009 and 2010, the trio participated in the Banff Centre Chamber Music Residency for three weeks under scholarship, and won the Felix Galimir Chamber Music Award in 2010. Also in 2010, Jamie was awarded the 2010 Orford String Quartet Scholarship by the Ontario Arts Council, who remarked that Jamie "plays with conviction and confidence, producing a singing tone". Jamie has also participated in the Music School Festival Orchestra program in Chautauqua, New York, as well as the renowned Kneisel Hall chamber music festival in Blue Hill, Maine. In 2011, he won the UTSO concerto competition. Jamie is a member of the Arkadas Quartet, who will be spending time in Banff this summer for the Banff Centre Chamber Music Residency.

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Violin I

Emily Kruspe, *Concertmaster*
Nah Ahn
Andreea Arbore
Philene Chen
Calvin Cheng
Tania Cheng
Alessia Disimino
James Hayes
Wesley Khurana
Eslin McKay
Stelth Ng
Sebastian Sallans
Johnson Tam
Meagan Turner
Kyle Yuen

Violin II

Coco Chen, *principal*
Adelaide Beach
Wesley Bells
Andrew Chan
Holly Cheng
Chang Liu
Iain McKay
Meghan Ruel
Erick Oliver Wawrzekiewicz
Amos Wong
Justina Wong
Ruth-Anne Yiu
Julija Zibrat

Viola

Christopher Arnold, *principal*
Matthew Antal
Nathan Gilsenan
Gabriella Kertesz
Jesse Morrison
Elise Nagami
Julia Park
Andrea Poon
Anne Marie Prévost
Madeleine Spence
Christopher Wong

Cello

Amahl Arulanandam, *principal*
Nia-Imara Barberousse
Austin Chao
Jenny Cheong
Min Joo Cho
Tess Crowther
AJ Fu
Sarah Jane Johnson

Lyndon Kirkley
Michael Lam
Evan Lamberton
Dayoung Seo
Beth Silver
Rosalind Zhang

Bass

Alexander Lambermont, *principal*
Fraser Gottlieb
Alanna Gunn
Jury Kobayashi-Baxter
Douglas Ohashi

Flute

Dalia Al-Khafajy
Jessica Leung
Jacky Tam

Piccolo

Jessica Leung
Jacky Tam

Oboe

Michelle Chang
Agnes Ng
Aleh Remezau

English horn

Michelle Chang
Agnes Ng

Clarinet

Kishan Chouhan, *bass*
Omar Ho
Katie Steadman

Bassoon

Jeffrey Clements, *and contra*
Christopher Kostyshyn

Horn

Carlie Bigelow
Jennifer Fawcett
Christopher Going
Tina Shapero

Trumpet

Alastair Chaplin
Rachel O'Connor
Benjamin Promane
Brindley Venables

Trombone

Ryan Broughton
Emma Metzger
Barrington Venables

Tuba

Stephen Vettese

Percussion

Bruce Chi
Dorian Cox
Abigail Fisher
Alejandro Céspedes Pazos
Rafael Ponciano

Harp

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